

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

DESCRIPTION OF A NEW SPECIES OF PLOVER FROM
THE EAST COAST OF MADAGASCAR.

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The apparently new species of plover here described is represented in the United States National Museum series by five specimens. Three of these were in a collection of birds lately received from Dr. W. L. Abbott; the other two were obtained by exchange some years ago from the Paris Museum.

Ægialitis thoracica sp. nov.

Type No. 151,174, U. S. National Museum, ♀ adult, Loholoka, east coast of Madagascar, June 3, 1895. Dr. W. L. Abbott, collector.

Crown, back, scapulars, tertials, and wing-coverts hair brown, the feathers edged with pale or deep buff, those of the greater wing-coverts edged and tipped with white; primaries, secondaries, rump, median upper tail-coverts, and middle rectrices dark clove brown; shafts of primaries (including the third) with white on terminal half; primary coverts brownish black, tipped with white; lateral upper tail-coverts white; inner primaries narrowly bordered on inner web and tipped with white; base of outer webs white; secondaries tipped with white, which become broader toward the innermost. Forehead, lores, cheeks, throat, axillars, under wing-coverts, sides of body, and flanks white; a line from upper mandible to lower anterior border of eye, continued posteriorly through and including ear-coverts black, connecting with a narrower black band extending across lower border of nape, and with a broad black pectoral band, the latter more extensive on sides of chest; an interocular crescent-shaped black band borders the white forehead and separates it from a white line over eyes, ear-coverts, and passing across nape as a conspicuous rufous band (leaving the black crown patch entirely surrounded by a white band and the latter isolated from other white markings); a white band below the black pectoral band passes abruptly into cinnamon buff on the abdomen and under tail-coverts, that of the abdomen extends up on sides of body to the black band across breast, intercepting the white. Three outer tail feathers white, with more or less dusky markings,

especially on the two inner ones; next inner pair (4th) dusky, with white tips; 5th pair hair brown, becoming black subterminally, with a deep buff tip. Bill, legs, and feet black in dried skin. Wing, 4.00; tail, 1.72; tarsus, 1.20; culmen (exposed), .69 inches.

In another female (No. 151,169) the wing measures 4.20 inches; the other measurements of the five specimens are very much the same.

This species seems to be most nearly related to *Ægialitis varia* (Vieillot) of Africa, and also found in Madagascar, but differs from it mainly in the presence of the black pectoral band and the absence of a wholly black shaft in the third primary; the white line posterior to the black crescent between eyes is more pronounced and the lesser wing-coverts and primary coverts are not decidedly blackish. There is also a slight difference in size, particularly noticeable in the bills.

The two specimens received from the Paris Museum are sexed as males, and are precisely similar to those collected by Dr. Abbott. They were collected by M. Lantz, in 1882, on the southeast coast of Madagascar. In addition to this information the labels bear the names '*Charadrius tenellus*,' and, in a later handwriting, '*pecuarius*' [= *varia*].

From an examination of the specimens in the National Museum and a careful comparison of descriptions, it appears that no described plumages of either *Ægialitis tenella* or *Æ. varia* possess black pectoral bands.

I was rather loth to consider the species unnamed after examining the two specimens from the Paris Museum, as the bird must be well known to the French authors, particularly Milne-Edwards and Grandidier, whose great work on Madagascar birds I have had no opportunity to consult. Thinking there might be some reference to the black pectoral band in the account of *Æ. varia* in this work, I wrote to Mr. Witmer Stone, of the Philadelphia Academy, who has access to it, and he has very kindly furnished me with the following extract* under *Charadrius pecuarius* Temm. (as they prefer to write it):

"Ce Pluvier africain se trouve aussi à Madagascar, sur les côtes de l'est comme sur celles de l'ouest. Il est en dessus d'un brun roussâtre clair avec une couronne blanche autour de la tête qu'un diadème noirâtre sépare du front, qui est également blanc ainsi que les joues; la gorge, la poitrine, que traverse, chez les adultes, une large bande noire, et les sous-caudales, sont blanches; le ventre est roussâtre. Cette bande noire qui traverse la poitrine chez les adultes n'a pas encore été signalée chez les individus Africains."

It is very remarkable that the black pectoral band should be present in adults from Madagascar and absent in those from Africa, where the species is said to be common in many places and breeds and from whence it was originally described.

The two species, *varia* and *thoracica*, are apparently found together on the east coast of Madagascar, where Dr. Abbott collected a specimen of each at Loholoka on June 3. It was probably this association of the species that led the authors of the above-mentioned work to consider them adult and young of one species.

* Hist. Phys. Nat. et Polit. de Madagascar, XII, Ois. tome I, pp. 511-512.